



Tennessee Regulatory Authority

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Protecting the Public Trust: Enforcing the Laws Overseeing Utility Fraud

Nashville, Tennessee – 2002 was one of the busiest years for the Tennessee Regulatory Authority (TRA) in terms of combating telemarketing abuses.

The TRA investigates complaints of customers of public utility companies under TRA jurisdiction and enforces the laws and statutes concerning matters related to telephone fraud and telemarketing violations. It also operates the state Do Not Call Program.

“The laws and programs created by the Tennessee General Assembly have been extremely helpful and allow us to aggressively deal with telemarketing violations and telecommunications fraud,” said Consumer Services Division chief, Eddie Roberson. “There still remains, however, an element within the industry of those willing to skirt the law.”

Arguably, one of largest and most significant matters settled by the TRA during 2002 involved Talk.com, a national full-service provider of telecommunications services.

The investigation, which spanned a two-year period and ran concurrently with an investigation by the Florida Public Service Commission, concluded with approval of a settlement with Talk.com of \$325,000. The company was found to have committed numerous telephone slamming and cramming violations as well as violated the Tennessee Do Not Call statute.

Noteworthy also during 2002 was the number of settlements associated with Tennessee’s Do Not Call statute. The TRA approved settlement agreements with (14) companies (totaling \$174,700) that were found to have violated the state’s telemarketing statute.

Of the past year Roberson said, “The state’s consumer-friendly laws have indeed been effective in curbing fraudulent telephone activity and unwanted telemarketing. It’s gratifying to know that consumers have confidence enough in these government services to trust us to resolve their complaints. Our goal is to further reduce unwanted solicitation calls to Tennesseans during 2003.”

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